

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Erwin

National Fish Hatchery





The Erwin National Fish Hatchery

is one of more than 75 units in the National Fish Hatchery System administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Service also manages over 500 national wildlife refuges and major fish and wildlife research laboratories across the country. As the Nation's primary steward of fish and wildlife resources, the Service provides leadership in habitat and wetlands protection; fish and wildlife research and technical assistance; and in the conservation and protection of migratory birds, anadromous fishes, certain marine mammals, and threatened and endangered species.

*Erwin
National
Fish
Hatchery*

Welcome and Enjoy Your Visit!

Over a century ago, it was recognized that conservation measures were necessary to maintain good fishing in our public waters. Fishing has probably always been one of America's leading forms of outdoor recreation. As part of the National Broodstock Program, Erwin National Fish Hatchery produces rainbow trout eggs that are shipped nationwide to other hatcheries to help preserve this tradition for present as well as future generations of Americans.



photos: USFWS

What we do

Established in 1894 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Erwin National Fish Hatchery produces 13 million disease-free eggs annually from four strains of rainbow trout broodstock. These eggs are shipped to other Federal, State and Tribal hatcheries to support their fishery management efforts. The station also provides eggs to research centers and universities. Broodstock operations are performed in a manner that will preserve or optimize the genetic diversity of hatchery fish.

*cover photo:
Hollingsworth*



Rainbow Trout

Rainbow trout prefer cold, fresh water that seldom exceeds 65°F. They are managed for recreational fishing and to mitigate losses caused by water development projects.

What can you do?

Visitors are welcome to tour the hatchery or picnic in areas provided for the public.



*Erwin
National
Fish
Hatchery is one
of many U.S.
hatcheries
located in the
southeast region.
These hatcheries
serve a vital role
in the
management of
our fishery
resources.*

**Hatchery Hours: 7:00 am - 3:30 pm
Monday Through Friday**

Six raceways are available on weekends for viewing, although the lower raceway are closed to protect the valuable broodstock. A broodstock display pond is located by the information kiosk. Picnic pavilion, and parking areas are provided for public use. During your visit please feel free to call upon us to answer any questions you may have concerning the hatchery.

Occasionally, you may see hatchery personnel collecting eggs from brood fish or feeding fish and cleaning raceways. You are welcome to watch and ask questions, but please use caution around fish and egg rearing areas. This hatchery must maintain a disease-free status. Please do not put anything into the water.

Group Tours

Group tours may be arranged in advance with the Hatchery Manager.



Area Recreational Activities

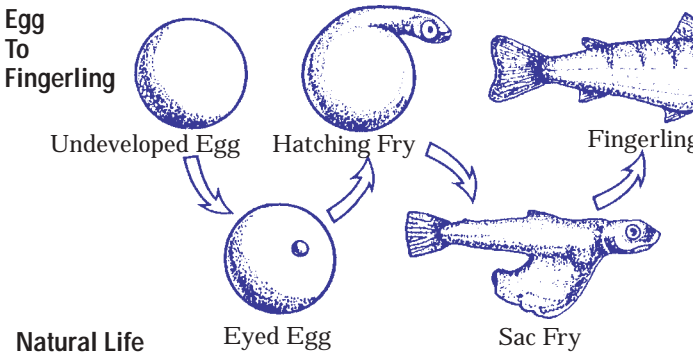
Fishing

Watauga, Boone, and S. Holston reservoirs are within an hours drive of the hatchery. These lakes provide a variety of fishing and camping activities. Fishing for trout is quite popular in area spring-fed mountain streams.

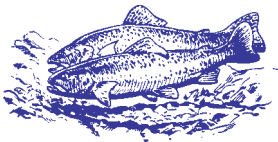
Camping

Camping and picnic facilities are available in the Rock Creek Recreational Area operated by the U.S. Forest Service. This area is located five miles east of the town of Erwin.

Life-Cycle Of Rainbow Trout



Trout eggs are deposited in prepared redds, or nests in the gravel of stream beds and hatch in 8 weeks or more. A young fish or fry lives for 3 to 4 weeks on food absorbed from the yolk sac.



About the time the yolk is completely absorbed, the fingerling emerges from the

gravel and feeds on aquatic organisms. Of many eggs deposited in the gravel, only a very few young fish are produced and survive to adulthood.

Most of the eggs die from natural causes, such as floods, silt, drought, or predators. Under favorable conditions, relatively few reach catchable size by fisherman.



River Rafting
Several local rafting outfitters provide white-water rafting expeditions along the Nolichucky River, including trips through the scenic Nolichucky River Gorge.

1. Visitor Parking

2. Visitor Center

Various exhibits are on display. Restrooms are provided for your convenience.

3. Hatchery Office

The hatchery office is open from 7:00 am to 3:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

4. Hatchery Building

Following spawning operations, freshly fertilized eggs are measured into egg jar incubators located in this area. The eggs are incubated for 15 days until they reach the “eyed” stage. They are then sorted and shipped to various hatcheries and research facilities. This hatchery ships approximately 13 million eggs per year. A small number of eggs are hatched and reared for use as future broodstock. These fish are raised in the hatchery building tanks until they are 3-4 inches in length. They are then transferred to the outside raceways.

5. Upper Production Raceways

Future broodstock are fed and cared for in this area after transfer from the hatchery building tanks. Demand feeders are used to feed the fish. These feeders are filled twice per week. The fish learn to release feed from the feeder by hitting the



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wire that hangs in the water. Use of these feeders results in a tremendous labor savings and allows fish to efficiently utilize available feed. Fish remain in the upper production raceways until they are one-year-old. They are then moved to the lower broodstock raceways for rearing during their second year of life.

6. Lower Broodstock Raceways

Adult brood fish are held in this area, and mature when they are two years old. At this age, male and female fish are separated in preparation for spawning. Female fish are checked once a week for ripeness. Eggs from ripe females are collected in pans and fertilized with milt from



male fish. The freshly fertilized eggs are then taken into the hatchery building and placed in jar incubators. Following spawning, the old brood fish are distributed by truck to other hatcheries, lakes, and streams. A new year class of broodstock will take their place during the next year. The



weatherports (large, white dome tents) that cover the raceways provide broodstock with protection from the sun and predacious birds.

Caution: 4, 5, & 6: Only fish should be in the water. Disturbing fish or incubating eggs can cause harm and ultimately loss of fish populations.

7. Pumphouses

These water pumping facilities provide 400 gallons per minute of spring water to the upper raceways and recirculate used water through the lower broodstock raceways.

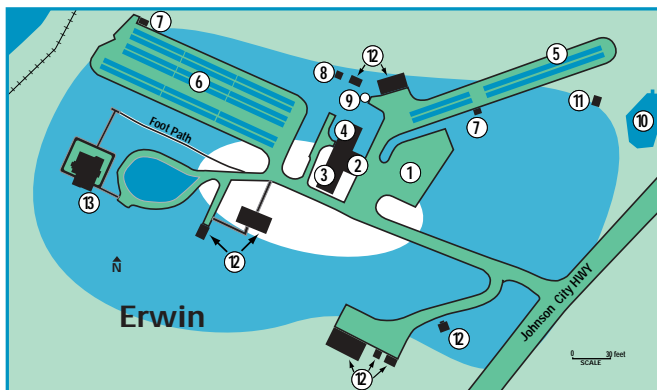
8. Aeration Building

Water that passes through the lower raceways is collected and pumped back to the aeration building. Oxygen is added to the reused water in this building. The water is then recirculated through the broodstock raceways.

9. Liquid Oxygen Storage Tank

Liquid oxygen stored in this tank is used to oxygenate the pumped, reused water in the lower broodstock





*For Additional
Information
Contact:
Hatchery
Manager
Erwin
National
Fish
Hatchery
520 Federal
Hatchery Road
Erwin,
Tennessee 37650
Telephone:
(423) 743 4712*

raceways. Underground supply lines also allow the addition of oxygen to the upper production raceways.

10. Main Spring

This is the main water supply to the hatchery producing 1000 gallons per minute of constant 55°F water. The spring has been covered with rock to prevent introduction of disease organisms.

11. Picnic Pavilion

The picnic pavilion is available for public use throughout the year.

**12. Maintenance
Buildings,
Garages,
Residence**
Hatchery
personnel only.

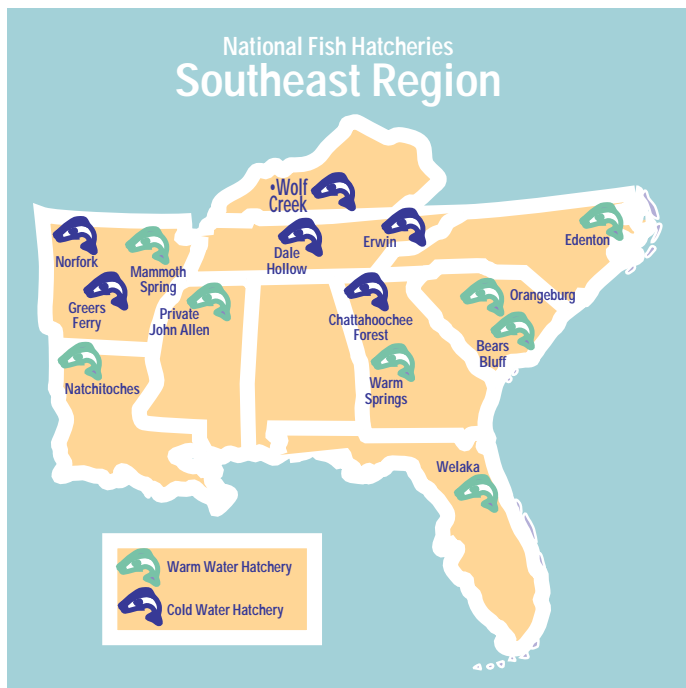
**13. Heritage
Museum**
Open Daily 1–5
pm, May 1–
October 31



photos: USFWS

Built in 1903, this building served as the Hatchery Superintendent's residence. In 1982, the Fish and Wildlife Service entered into a cooperative agreement with Unicoi County for use of the building as a local heritage museum. The museum contains several exhibits that interpret local history.

We enjoyed having you visit the hatchery and invite you to return often. Your awareness of our resource and its needs is the basic foundation for support of healthy fish and wildlife populations.



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National Fish Hatchery
520 Federal Hatchery Road
Erwin, Tennessee 37650
423/743 4712
<http://www.fws.gov/r4eao>

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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